

Bunting, Jabez.

Great Work Described and Recommended, in a Sermon
Preached...

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A

GREAT WORK

DESCRIBED AND RECOMMENDED,

IN A

SERMON,

PREACHED ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 1805,

AT THE

REV. DR. WINTER'S MEETING HOUSE,

New Court, Carey Street, London,

BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE

SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.

By JABEZ BUNTING.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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THIRD EDITION.

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Τῶν παντῶν κακῶν αἰτίον μὴ ἀναγινώσκειν βιβλία, ψυχῆς  
φαρμακᾶ.

CHRYSOStOM.

Disciplina, custos spei, retinaculum fidei, dux itineris salutaris,  
fomes ac nutrimentum bonæ indolis, magistra virtutis. CYPRIAN.

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STREET WORK

DETERMINED AND RECOMMENDED

THE

STREET WORK

TEACHING OF WEDNESDAY

AT THE

RE-APPOINTMENT

AND THE

STREET WORK

SUNDAY SCHOOL

IN AMERICA

STREET WORK INSTITUTE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

THURSDAY

TEACHING OF WEDNESDAY

AND THE

STREET WORK

THE

STREET WORK

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



19. 3. 2

School of Religion  
-  
Clerical

AD

By the thirteenth rule of the UNION, it is required; that an Annual Sermon shall be preached before the Members. Accordingly, the Rev. Mr. BURDER delivered the first Anniversary Discourse at one of the Chapels of the Connexion (the late Rev. Mr. WESLEY's) to which the *Author* has the honour to belong; and the following year *he* was requested to perform a similar office in the Rev. Mr. THORP's (now Dr. Winter's) Meeting-house. With this request he was led to

comply by a conviction, that the religious instruction of the Rising Generation is an object of the first magnitude; that its importance is by no means *sufficiently* felt, even by the Christian World; and that therefore no exertions, however feeble, which might possibly contribute to excite a more general and lively interest in favour of so good a cause, could be properly or innocently declined. The same views have also induced him, though not without much diffidence, to print his Sermon; especially as its publication appeared to be the universal wish of those who heard it, and was strongly urged by others, whom particular circumstances prevented from attending when it was delivered.

A few remarks and illustrations, which want of time then compelled the Author to omit, are now added in their proper places; and to the candour of the reader, and the blessing of God, the whole is humbly committed.

LONDON, *June* 1, 1805.



# SERMON, &c.

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*Nehemiah vi. 3.*

I AM DOING A GREAT WORK.

**S**UCH was the manly and emphatical declaration of *Nehemiah* when engaged, by divine appointment, in rebuilding the ruined walls of the holy city, Jerusalem: And such is the language which all good men may with propriety adopt, when employed in any undertaking which has scriptural requisition or example for its warrant, and which is piously designed, and judiciously adapted, to promote the salvation of souls, and the glory of God. Such, therefore, I will further add, is the profession which *you*, my christian brethren, are authorized to assume, who are associated for the purpose of attempting the religious education of poor and destitute children, by **PROTESTANT SUNDAY SCHOOLS**. You, indeed, are not occupied, like *Nehemiah* and his colleagues, in the erection of a *material* building; but you are endeavouring to prepare “lively stones” for that spiritual house, which is “built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets,” and of which “Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone.” Institutions so excellent, when wisely and consistently managed, deserve from the Ministers of Religion every encouragement: and though painfully conscious of much unfitness for the honourable task, which your request has imposed on me this evening, I could not allow myself to withhold my humble services. Happy shall I be, if by a few plain remarks, which will make no pretensions to novelty or to ornament, I shall be enabled to animate your zeal, and to strengthen your hands in God. Let me then entreat your attention, your candid indulgence, and your prayers, while I attempt to remind you of the **NATURE** of your **WORK**;—to evince its **MAGNITUDE** and importance;—and to make some practical **IMPROVEMENT** of the subject.

I. As to the **NATURE** of your **WORK**, if I rightly understand it, there are three principal departments of useful exertion which it comprehends. Your kind offices for the children of your charge consist in teaching them to read the best of **BOOKS**;—in communicating to their minds the most interesting and momentous **INSTRUCTION**;—and in promoting the formation of the most valuable and important **HABITS**.

1. You are employed in *teaching Children to read THE BEST OF BOOKS*. You are *Christians*; and therefore need not to be told what book it is which I thus characterize. Your thoughts have already led you to that Book which is “given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that Book of which the immortal **LOCKE** so eloquently declared, that it “has God for its Author, Truth without any mixture of Error for its Matter, and Salvation for its End;” that Book, in fine, of which your own experience, I trust, has taught you to form the highest estimate, as your best guide in all difficulties, your best guardian in all dangers, your best solace in all adversities. From this Book you wish that others should derive the same blessings, which it has imparted to yourselves. For you are *Protestants*, as well as *Christians*; and therefore love the Bible too well, to desire any partial monopoly of its solemn truths or precious promises. You prize so highly the provision of your Father’s house, that you cannot be content to eat your morsel alone; nor are you satisfied because you have “bread enough and to spare,” whilst others “perish with hunger.” That which is of universal interest and concern, you wish to make universally known. You are fully convinced that the Holy Scriptures ought not to be exclusively confined to persons of any profession or rank in society; and that “the word of Salvation is sent” to the poor as well as to the rich, to the vulgar as well as to the learned. It is **THE MIGHTY GOD, EVEN THE LORD** that “hath spoken,” in these lively oracles; and he hath “called” all the inhabitants of “the earth, from the rising of the sun, unto the going

down thereof," to listen and obey. "Secret things," indeed, there are, which "belong to God ; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and unto our children for ever." To children, therefore, you are anxious to impart them ; persuaded that, if believably received, faithfully retained, and humbly improved, they will be "life to their souls, and marrow to their bones." "Wherewithal," asks David, "shall a young man cleanse his ways? By taking heed thereto," it is instantly replied, "according to thy word." The scriptures are possessed of such divine fulness and sufficiency, that they provide a portion of meat in due season for persons of all ages, and in all the diversified circumstances and conditions of life. They afford "milk for babes," that they "may grow thereby," as well as stronger and more appropriate nourishment for "the Man of God," that he "may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

2. It is another branch of your WORK, to *communicate* to those under your care *the most interesting and momentous INSTRUCTION*. This you labour to accomplish, by taking every opportunity of explaining to them the truths of Religion, and of impressing on their hearts, by distinct and particular appeals to the conscience, the general principles and obligations of Christian Morality. Yours are not common Schools, designed to teach only *the art of reading*. You are wont to address your young pupils in the language of Philip to the Eunuch; "UNDERSTANDEST thou what thou readest?" And they may very justly adopt, in reply to your question, the Eunuch's answer; "How can I, unless some one GUIDE me?" This, Brethren, is one essential part of your great Work, to guide and assist these little ones in their endeavours to understand what they read; to "teach their young ideas how to shoot;" to aid their imperfect conceptions of divine things; to rectify their mistakes; to solve their doubts; to explain the terms of Scripture; to illustrate its beauties; and to enforce its precepts. The wells of Salvation are deep; and, in the present infancy of their mental



powers, they are unable, if abandoned to themselves, to draw up the living waters. But you kindly "help their infirmities." While they read the Sacred Oracles, you ever and anon, like Philip, "open your mouths, and begin at the same Scripture, and preach unto them Jesus." You instruct them in the Being and Perfections of God; their own immortality and accountableness, as subjects of a moral government; their fall in Adam; their consequent guilt, depravity, and danger; the redemption that is in Christ, its necessity, nature, method, value, and importance; their several duties to their Creator and Redeemer; and their various relative and social obligations to their fellow-creatures. These instructions you doubtless strive to clothe in plain and easy language, accommodated to their tender capacities; particularly enlarging on those historical parts of the Bible, which, teaching duty by example, at once impress the imagination and convince the understanding. You are also careful, I presume, that your mode of teaching shall be affectionate and conciliating, as well as earnest and serious; for that which most evidently proceeds from the heart is most likely to reach the heart, and to meet with a due reception. In this department of your work, I trust it is likewise your study to exercise much patience and forbearance; to "gather the lambs in your arms;" and to "carry them in your bosoms." You are solicitous to be preserved from "despising the day of small things;" from "breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax;" from "provoking your children to wrath," and discouraging their sincere, though feeble efforts, by the austerity of your aspect and manners, or the unnecessary sharpness of your rebukes. And you remember, above all, that the most incessant and unwearied diligence is indispensable to your success. So the prophet Isaiah has taught you. "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little."

3. Another principal part of your Work is *the promotion of those HABITS of Piety and Virtue*, which are of the utmost value and importance. The power of Habit is so universally understood and acknowledged, that it needs no illustration from me. We are all in a very considerable degree under its influence; and young minds in particular are subject to its operation.

“Children like tender osiers take the bow,

“And as they first are fashion'd still will grow.”

Aware of this general Law of our Nature, you wisely endeavour to turn it to the best advantage; and to engage it betimes in the cause of righteousness. It is your design to bring up these children, according to the apostolical direction, not only in the *admonition or doctrine*, (νᾱθεςία) but also in the *nurture or discipline* (ἐν παιδείᾳ) of the Lord. You wish to train them up” as Solomon advises, “in the way wherein they should go;” humbly trusting, that, by the divine blessing, these early habits will operate as an additional security, “when they are old,” to prevent their departure from it. It must be confessed, indeed, that, in this branch of Education, you labour, from the very nature of your institution, under considerable disadvantages; for it must be, in a great degree, confided to Parents, or others, who have the children more constantly under their notice and superintendence. This consideration demonstrates the vast importance of engaging Parents, if it be practicable, in a serious and uniform co-operation with your plans. Such a co-operation, could it once be generally effected, would greatly multiply your probabilities of success. In many cases, by proper representations, remonstrances, and directions, it might, I think, be obtained. In other instances, it is more to be desired than expected. But at all events, something considerable may be done, by the grace of God, through your own efforts, though single and unaided. It is scarcely possible, that children educated for a sufficient period, in a *well-conducted* Sunday School, should not contract strong and

forcible habits of order, regularity, and submission to superiors; of reverence for the Lord's Day; of respect for the public institutions of Religion, and attachment to the means of grace; of delight in singing the high praises of God, and in other devotional exercises. It is unnecessary to shew how useful such habits may be found in future life, by counteracting the temptations of the world; by resisting the workings of corrupt nature; and by retaining our youth in the practice of those external forms of Godliness, which may happily be conducive at length to their acquisition of its inward life and power.

Having thus reminded you of the Nature, I proceed,

II. To evince the **MAGNITUDE** and Importance of your Work. You are *doing a GREAT Work*. From various topics, which present themselves to my choice, for the illustration of this branch of the subject, I shall select the following. The service in which you are engaged is a Work of great and indispensable **OBLIGATION**; a Work of great and pressing **NECESSITY**; a Work of great probable benefit and utility; and a Work of great and singular **PIETY**.

1. This is a Work of great and indispensable **OBLIGATION**. It is enforced by *precepts* the most strong and express; and recommended by *examples* the most weighty and binding.

It is enforced by *precepts*. We read in the book of Ezra, that when the Jews were repairing the ruins of their city, certain persons came and asked them, "Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?" The answer to this question is contained in a subsequent passage: "They builded according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia." You, my brethren, if similarly questioned as to your proceedings, may plead an authority equally high and satisfactory. You too "build



according to the commandment of God." For hear the word of the Lord. *These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And THOU SHALT TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY UNTO THY CHILDREN, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.—I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he COMMANDED our fathers THAT THEY SHOULD MAKE THEM KNOWN TO THEIR CHILDREN: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.—Train up a CHILD in the way he should go.—Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* These citations afford the most plain and positive declarations, both of divine pleasure and of human duty. We therefore address to you the language of Artaxerxes, on the occasion before-mentioned: "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm?"

Your work, moreover, is recommended by all that authority which the brightest *Examples* can confer. Some of the most admired and eminent personages, whose characters are recorded in the Scriptures, were distinguished by a pious and benevolent regard for the rising generation of their times. To Abraham's everlasting honour it is related, that when Sodom was about to be destroyed, JEHOVAH said, "Shall I bide from Abraham that thing which I do? I know him, that he will command his CHILDREN, and his household

after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord." What fervour of affection does dying Jacob exhibit, when offering his last prayers to heaven for the children of Joseph: "God, before whom my fathers did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, BLESS THE LADS." David repeatedly expresses the same friendly concern for the youth of his day: "Come, ye CHILDREN, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.—Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children;—that our SONS may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our DAUGHTERS may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." Paul discovers a peculiar attachment to Timothy, who was a young disciple, and "from a CHILD," in consequence of the early instructions of his faithful mother, had "known the holy scriptures." And John, in his letter to the elect lady, declares that he "rejoiced greatly," because he "found of her CHILDREN walking in the truth." The ecclesiastical history of subsequent ages demonstrates, that whenever there has been a special revival of religion, it has been productive of zealous efforts for the pious education of the young. Those who have most fervently loved Christ have always been most careful to "feed his lambs." I will mention one proof among many. Those blessed witnesses for God, and faithful-opposers of the Papal Antichrist, the WALDENSES, who flourished about the twelfth century, are celebrated for their zeal and diligence in this work; and they were so successful in it, that "when certain Jesuits were sent among them to corrupt their children, they returned with much disappointment and confusion, because the children of seven years old were well principled enough to encounter the most learned of them all."\* But why do I insist so long on the subject of human authority and example? Has not the glorious SON of GOD left us a perfect pattern in this as well as in every other branch of duty? Let us devoutly listen to his words, and cheerfully imitate that

\* WESLEY'S Christian Library, Vol. 50. p. 299.

tender concern for children, of which he has set before us so striking an example. "And they brought young CHILDREN to him that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little CHILDREN to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." On another occasion, also, we read that "Jesus called a little CHILD unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, "among other things which the evangelist records at large, "Whoso shall receive one such little CHILD in my name, receiveth me." The conduct of JEHOVAH himself accords with these sentiments of his incarnate Son, and strongly binds us to as close an imitation as is practicable. Children have been in some cases the particular *objects of divine promise and prophecy*. Is it not written, "Out of the mouths of BABES and SUCKLINGS," that is, of very young children, "hast thou ordained strength;" or, as our Saviour renders it, after the Septuagint, in his application of this ancient prediction to an occurrence in his own history, "perfected praise." Children are likewise, not unfrequently, at an extremely early period of life, the *subjects of divine grace*. We have known some, and read of many more, who, when very young, have been very pious. To what did they owe their early attachments to righteousness? To the grace of God that was in them; to the good hand of our God that was upon them for good; to the drawings of the Father bringing them to the Saviour; to the strivings and influences of the Blessed Spirit, the author of every good and perfect gift.

Here then, my brethren, is your warrant for the undertaking in which you are engaged. You are complying with the injunctions, and imitating the example of Christ. You are following the "excellent of the earth," who now, "by faith and patience, inherit the promises." You are *doing a GREAT*



*work, for you are acting under the express authority and commission of JEHOVAH, and have the honour to be "workers together with God."* But I observe,

2. This is a work of great and pressing **NECESSITY**. The precepts of God enjoin a "reasonable service." Not one of them is arbitrary and capricious. They are all founded in wisdom and propriety: and though we cannot always discern the reason of divine requisitions, we may be perfectly assured that some such reason exists. In the case now before us, that reason is very clear and apparent. The obligation under which we are placed, to attempt the pious education of children, naturally and righteously results from the circumstances in which they are born, and which render such education necessary. Had we all continued in the same state of intellectual vigour and moral perfection, in which God created the first man, the case would perhaps have been somewhat different, and the need of early instruction from those about us less urgent. "But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the disorders of our rational nature "have introduced the necessity of education and tutors."\* Children are "born in sin, and shapen in iniquity." They enter the world ignorant of God, and naturally destitute of that influence from the Holy One, which alone can prevent them, as their active faculties expand and come into exercise, from contracting personal guilt, and sinking into the depths of depravity. Thus devoid of spiritual knowledge and power, they are introduced into a scene of temptations and of dangers, which they are totally unqualified to resist. The issue of the conflict, for which they are so unprepared, must inevitably be fatal to their everlasting interests, unless by intercourse with God they be furnished with heavenly wisdom, and strengthened by almighty grace. The sooner they are taught to implore these requisite and promised communications of supernatural aid, the more probability will there be, that their evil

\* See Mr. LAW's *Serious Call*; from which this illustration is borrowed

propensities will be effectually counteracted, and their souls recovered from the ruins of the fall.

I anticipate a difficulty, which may here suggest itself to the minds of some of my hearers. We allow, you will say, that the depraved nature of fallen man renders education necessary; and that this necessity perfectly justifies the obligation to engage in that work, on which you have before insisted at length. But to whom does this obligation attach? Does it not belong exclusively to *Parents*? And whom does it comprehend? Does it not include *our own* children only? Or are we bound to care for *others* also?

My brethren, we think you are. We think, that the *extension* of your care to the children of others is a work of great necessity, required by their circumstances and situation; and that the very fact of its necessity evinces its obligation. The duty of early instruction, it is allowed, devolves most naturally and most peculiarly on the parents of the children to be educated. And they are not PARENTS, but MONSTERS, who neglect to execute a trust so sacred, according to their best ability. But the fact is notorious, that *many such monsters there are*: who, careless about their own salvation, take no pains to promote that of their offspring. How much are these little orphans, for orphans they are in effect, to be pitied; much more to be pitied, as a celebrated writer truly observes, because they are rational and immortal. “Had they been mere animals, lions’ whelps, the old lioness would have taught them to catch prey, and to devour men. Even the sea-monsters would have drawn out their breasts to their young.”\* But towards these poor children their parents have acted like the ostrich, singular for her want of natural affection, “which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust; and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not her’s.” But shall these neglect-

\* Robinson.

ed little ones be left to "perish for lack of knowledge" and of grace? No! in God, and in the benevolent supporters of SUNDAY SCHOOLS, these fatherless babes shall find mercy.

Besides, there is no inconsiderable number of children, who are *literally* orphans. Those whose duty, and perhaps whose earnest desire and endeavour, it once was to train them up for heaven are now no more.

"For them no father's bosom  
"Throbs to soft sympathy and fond alarm;  
"No sheltring arm protects their tender blossom,  
"And screens their weakness from life's gathering storm."

My brethren, what shall *these* do? I will tell you what they do. Their destitute misery looks up to God in the heavens, and cries, Great Father of Angels, condescend to be *our* father, the guide of our youth! That GOD accepts the charge; and DELEGATES the execution of it to YOU. He presents these heirs of immortality before you, and says, "Take them; and nurse them for me." To you his language is, *Behold your sons and your daughters!* while to them he exclaims, with divine complacency, *Behold your fathers and your mothers!* Now will any of you object to this providential arrangement of the MOST HIGH, or decline the task which the voice of God in his dispensations so loudly calls upon you to undertake? Is there not here an evident *necessity* for your services?

Once more: there are other parents still alive, and deserving of the most honourable mention, whose deficiencies you are called upon to supply. There is a numerous class of persons, who, though affectionate and pious, are poor and indigent, and therefore have not the means of procuring instruction for their children, in the ordinary way, by sending them to daily schools. This must especially occur in populous and commercial cities, towns, and districts, where the children of the poor are employed, from a very early age, in various trades and occupations; so that the Lord's Day is their only period of leisure. Here then is another instance of the urgent necessity of your



undertaking. For it becomes you to recollect, that though their earthly parents are poor, they claim kindred in common with yourselves to "Our Father, who is in Heaven;" and the blessed Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brethren. The emergency of their case, therefore, requires, that you, whose cup of knowledge and prosperity runs over, should pour a little of your super-abundance into the empty vessels of your less favoured fellow-creatures. It calls upon you to imitate your Master, by taking these children of Providence into the arms of your compassionate care, and to become the instruments of blessing them with christian principles and christian consolations. I now add,

3. This is a Work of great probable benefit and UTILITY. Here a wide field presents itself to the imagination. I must content myself with a very rapid and cursory survey.

The CHILDREN THEMSELVES are likely to be most immediately and signally benefited by your labours. It is the smallest of the probable advantages of their religious education, that by it *much individual evil will be prevented*. In persons whose minds have been early imbued with good principles, and formed to virtuous habits, we may at least hope that the depravity of nature will be fettered and controlled; the workings of corruption checked and interrupted; and the progress of sin retarded.\* Now even the prevention of evil is an invaluable mercy. So David thought when he said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood." Many such blessings, I doubt not, my brethren, will rest on *your* heads.—But it is still more important to remark, that *much individual good may be reasonably expected* from your exertions. In many instances, though alas! not in all,

\* This point will receive further confirmation, when the reader shall peruse the facts and observations which are adduced in a subsequent part of the discourse, to prove the beneficial effects of early instruction on public morals. See p. 20.

the good seed which you sow, watered by the influences of Divine Grace, shall assuredly spring up, and produce "fruit unto holiness;" and "the end," we humbly trust, of thousands of the children whom you educate, will be "eternal life." O brethren, what an **END**! Amply does it deserve, and amply will it reward, all your diligence in using the means by which it is promoted. Consider your undertaking in connexion with this grand result, and you will at once perceive its vast importance. You are *doing a GREAT* work. You are saving souls from death, and preparing them for happiness unspeakable, both in the world that now is, and in that endless world which is to come. Eternity alone can adequately estimate the value, or measure the duration, of the benefits you confer. May myriads in that day rise up and call you blessed!

These are not enthusiastic expectations. They are warranted by *Reason*. For although a pious education cannot supply the *principle* of holiness; yet it can explain the *rule*, and enforce the *motives*, and direct to the true *source* of holiness. Such an education is in this way one of the chief means, which God blesses to the production of holiness. And in the use of means it is right and rational to expect the blessing. For "moral causes produce their effects as well as natural, though not always so fully, nor with equal certainty."\* And when they are seasonably and suitably employed, there is considerable probability that they will be ultimately successful. Early impressions are wonderfully deep and permanent. Children are compared by David to arrows in the hand of a mighty man. Now if these arrows be properly directed, and well aimed, in the first commencement of their motion, it is very likely that their subsequent course will correspond, as we wish, with the primary impulse which they receive. These general suggestions of reason are sanctioned by *Revelation*; and, blessed be God, many instances of youthful and persevering

\* Rural Philosophy, by ELY BATES, Esq. p. 149.

piety authorize us to add, that they are abundantly confirmed by *Experience*.

I observe further, that not only the children themselves, but some of THEIR IMMEDIATE CONNEXIONS also, will probably derive great spiritual benefit from your work. Your usefulness will not ultimately terminate on the individuals whom you educate; it will be extended to the domestic and social circles, of which they are or shall be members. Who can tell but that parents may become converts to the prayers, the exhortations, and the holy example of their own offspring? The annals of some Sunday Schools have already, I believe, realized this supposition.—Those who now are objects of tuition may in time themselves become heads of families; and, if pious, will communicate to those under *their* care the blessings which they may have obtained by your instrumentality. “Freely they have received,” and they will doubtless “freely give.” Thus God shall have in perpetuity a seed to serve him; for “one generation shall praise his works to another, and declare his mighty acts.” If “one sinner destroyeth much good,” one genuine convert, on the contrary, diffuses a very salutary and powerful influence among all his relative connexions.

Nor is this all. For what are NATIONS, but associations of families, and of the individuals who compose them? Whatever therefore improves men’s personal characters, and increases domestic order and virtue, is likely to yield the most substantial advantages to SOCIETY AT LARGE. Your’s is in fact a work of great patriotism. Next to the general publication of the glorious gospel, an object which is of all others the most transcendently important, I can conceive of nothing which seems to promise more real and extensive good to mankind, than the general education of the poor in christian principles and practices. And as Sunday Schools, when properly conducted, contribute very materially to facilitate this “consummation so devoutly to be wished,” their institution and



support deserve to be considered as a *national* concern of the first magnitude. Not only as men and as christians, but as Britons, we are bound to give them our zealous patronage and assistance. If I were asked, By what means may the welfare of our beloved country, and the stability of the state, be most effectually promoted? I would decidedly answer thus: Labour with all your might to advance two grand objects,—first, the speedy promulgation of pure and primitive Christianity in all corners, and among all the adult subjects, of the empire,—and, secondly, the immediate establishment of religious Schools for the instruction of the rising generation: I beg leave to fortify my humble opinion on this point by referring to a few interesting facts, and to the eminent authorities by whom they are stated.—It is generally known and allowed, that Scotland, and the low countries of it in particular, are distinguished from all other parts of the British Empire, by the attention which is there bestowed on early education, and the provision which is made for the wide and regular diffusion of its benefits. “It is provided by law, in Scotland, that there shall be a school established, and a master appointed, in every parish. Many additional schools are also founded by donation and legacies; so that in the southern parts of Scotland, it is very rare (says Mr. HOWARD) to meet with any person who cannot both read and write; and it is deemed scandalous not to be possessed of a bible.”\* Now, what are the effects of all this on the national character and habits of the Scotch, and on the morals and order of Society?

\* See “A Father’s Instructions, Part III.” by the late Dr. PERCIVAL of Manchester, a most amiable man, and zealous philanthropist, whose name it would be ungrateful in the author of this sermon thus publicly to mention, without expressing the highest esteem and veneration for his memory.

A little anecdote, in confirmation of the statement which is above quoted, may not be here misplaced. A friend of the author was requested some years ago, during the period of his ministerial labours in Scotland, to distribute a parcel of religious books and tracts. He offered some of them to the servant of a family, in which he happened to be an occasional visitor at the time; but previously asked her whether she could read. *Read, Sir*, she replied, with an air and tone of mingled surprise and indignation, *do you think I was brought up in England?*

"It is principally owing to this," in Mr. HOWARD's opinion, "that the numerous emigrants from that country, dispersed over almost all Europe, appear with credit, and advance themselves in their several stations."\* From the Tables of the same justly celebrated writer it appears, that in the whole of Scotland, whose population, at the time of these calculations, was estimated to amount to, at least, one million six hundred thousand souls, only one hundred and thirty-four persons were convicted of capital crimes in a period of nineteen years; being, on the average, about *seven* in each year. In a subsequent table we are informed, that in the single circuit of Norfolk in England, including six counties, and containing not more, it is supposed, than eight hundred thousand persons, being but *one half* the population of Scotland, no less than four hundred and thirty-four criminals were condemned to death in the space of twenty-three years; which is an annual average of nearly *nineteen* capital convicts, besides eight hundred and seventy-four sentenced to transportation. The *double* population of Scotland being taken into the estimate, there is thus a difference in its favour, in this important point, in the ratio of seven to thirty eight.† Ireland, on the other hand, is that part of the Empire, in which the poor are most ignorant, and their education is most flagrantly neglected. "It is a fact ascertained by the most diligent and accurate inquiries, lately set on foot in Ireland, that even in the most enlightened part of it, not above one third of the people receive any education at all; and throughout the rest of the Island not a twentieth part have even learned their alphabet. What has been the consequence? Such scenes of wanton

\* Howard's Account of Lazarettos: 4to, 1789, p. 120.

† See Howard on Lazarettos, p. 248, 249, 252. It may be necessary to observe to those readers, who heard this sermon delivered, that the calculation now published varies considerably from the one which was read to the congregation from the Duke de Liancourt's pamphlet, as quoted by Dr. Percival. The Duke has strangely erred in the representation he has given of the result of Mr. Howard's Tables. By a careful inspection of the original work, the author has been enabled to correct the mistake into which he was foreled; and the statement which is here printed, he believes to be perfectly accurate.

eruelty and savage ferocity, as exceed the power of description."\* These are the remarks of the Bishop of London. An Irish Prelate, the Bishop of Killaloe, accords with him in sentiment. After describing the calamities which have of late years desolated his country, he proceeds to recommend the general communication of religious instruction, as the only adequate remedy. "I will no longer dwell," says he, "upon these painful recollections, but draw from them the following conclusion, that all the evils which we have suffered, we have drawn upon ourselves, by neglecting, as we have done, the morals and religion of the people; and that if we do not actively and immediately turn from that way, we but postpone the hour of destruction."†

Such are the considerations which evince the probable benefits of Sunday Schools to Civil Society. I must not wholly omit to add, though I have time to glance only at this particular, that there is another community, still more dear and venerable, the interests of which are materially involved in this great work; even THE CHURCH of the living God, which is the spiritual "mother of us all;" that Church, in whose behalf so many miraculous dispensations of Divine Providence have been successively exhibited; that Church, the members of which GOD OUR SAVIOUR hath "bought with his own blood;" that Church for which so many subsequent martyrs have also bled; and in whose sanctification and increase the Holy Spirit is continually employed. On the accession of the rising generation to her standard it is evident that this Church Catholic must depend, under God, for the future maintenance of her cause, and for the promised extension of her conquests. And I doubt not but Sunday Schools will largely contribute, in connexion with other means, to

\* Bishop Porteus's Charge in 1803, p. 26.

† Bishop of Killaloe's Sermon before the Lord Lieutenant, in Nov. 1798

Some other facts, strikingly illustrative of this branch of the subject, which were omitted, from want of time, when this discourse was delivered, are sunjoined in an appendix.



recruit the number of her sons, and to accelerate her millennial triumphs. You are *doing a GREAT Work*, my friends; for by your instrumentality, in conjunction with that of others similarly engaged, the once crucified but now exalted JESUS shall at length obtain the honours he has deserved; and wear the crown, as he will constitute the joy, of all the earth.

4. From the whole of the preceding arguments it appears, that the service in which you are employed is a work of great and singular PIETY; for by it much glory will be brought to God, “of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things.” Of every thing good his grace is the origin and author; and of every thing good his glory is the ultimate object and final end.—God is glorified by your work itself. The very effort is a fruit of righteousness, which redounds to his honour, and reflects lustre on that holy gospel, by the principles and spirit of which you are prompted, I trust, to engage in this benevolent undertaking.—And he will be eminently glorified by your success. The number of his spiritual worshippers shall be increased; his blessed word shall be more extensively read and venerated; his holy sabbaths shall be rescued from profane violation, and his sanctuaries from contemptuous neglect; his praises shall be sung by lips from which blasphemies only would otherwise have resounded; the mouths of babes and sucklings shall again lisp Hosannas to the Son of David; the righteous shall hear it and rejoice; the harps of angels shall be tuned to sweeter and louder strains; and the enemies of the Lord and of his Christ shall be covered with everlasting shame and confusion of face. “The wall was finished,” says Nehemiah: “and it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of God.”

III. It now remains only that I should attempt some practical IMPROVEMENT of what has been advanced. And I observe,

1. The magnitude of your undertaking demonstrates *the propriety of your UNION*. The Israelites who were connected with Nehemiah, in the work to which our text refers, are your exemplars in this procedure. It is truly edifying to read, in the third chapter of this book, of the zeal with which all ranks and classes of people confederated on that great occasion, and of the harmony with which they acted together.—It is only with those whom we believe, in the judgment of *scriptural charity*, to be “Israelites indeed,” that union is either proper or practicable. For how “can two walk together,” or work together, with comfort and advantage, “unless they be agreed,” at least in all points of essential and vital importance? But there are certain lesser differences among good men, which do not disqualify them for a cordial co-operation with each other in some of their great and principal designs. There are seasons, it is true, when even these differences, so far from being renounced, ought to be firmly and conscientiously, though candidly and temperately, avowed. But there are other seasons when, without any sacrifice of principle, they may be honestly forgotten and overlooked. The circumstances under which you have associated were properly deemed to constitute an opportunity, which not only justified, but loudly demanded, the exercise of this mutual forbearance and indulgence. All smaller distinctions may well be suspended, and all our comparatively *little* controversies hushed into silence, when we are called unitedly to engage in so *great* a work. As many as appear really to build on the same evangelical foundation, Christ crucified, to “walk by the same rule” of Christian Holiness, and to “mind the same end,” the same godly and benevolent design, “peace be upon them;” for, whatever be their particular denomination, they are in our estimation a branch of “the Israel of God,” and justly claim the right hand of fellowship. Among such persons, though there be not in every thing an entire and perfect accordance, there does, however, exist a sincere and profitable union in the fundamental verities of the Christian faith, and in all those general views and prin-

principles, on which Sunday Schools are established. Among such, therefore, there may be, and ought to be, in all cases, an union of Affection and Good-will; and in many cases, an union of Efforts and Exertions. "Let there be," said good PHILIP HENRY, "in necessary things unity; in every thing charity; and then there need not be in every thing uniformity." Now if the union of real Christians, on such an occasion as the present, be thus possible, is it not highly desirable and advantageous? Will it not tend to concentrate the strength, and to increase the zeal, of those who labour in the service, and so conduce to the speedier and better execution of the work itself? Are not two, when thus united, "better than one?" The votaries of Literature and Science, and the busy sons of Trade and Commerce, have found it expedient to associate for the promotion of *their* respective pursuits. Bad men are united for the purposes of impiety. "Devils with Devils damn'd firm concord hold." Why then should the active friends of God and of mankind alone refuse to combine their forces or their counsels against the common foe, and in support of this common cause? Thus combined, they will be terrible to sin and to Satan, "as an army with banners."

You, my Brethren, have felt the force of these considerations; and believing yourselves to be influenced by the same Spirit, serving the same Master, actuated by the same motives, and pursuing the same end, you have wisely determined, like the Jews of old, to "strengthen each other for the work," by mutual consultations and encouragements. Go on and prosper! Still "follow the things which make for peace, and things whereby ye may edify one another." Carefully guard against the introduction of any thing into your plans, conversations, or publications, which will interrupt your christian harmony. Like the Pythagorean Philosophers, set a mark of infamy on the number *two*, as being the first departure from *unity*. Fervently love God and one another; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. He shall look



down with approbation on your labours; and the smiles of his countenance shall light you to success.

2. The magnitude of your work suggests also *the necessity of inviting a more extensive co-operation*. The fields, in this department of usefulness, are white unto harvest; and there is reason to believe that the harvest itself will ultimately be great. But the labourers, such labourers at least as are duly qualified by knowledge and by piety, are comparatively few. Endeavour to multiply their number; and zealously promote in your respective neighbourhoods and connexions, whenever it can be done with prudence and propriety, the establishment of new Schools. I observe with pleasure, that this is one object of your union. You adopt in substance the language of good Nehemiah; "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire! Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." May the success of your applications for help be similar to his! May many adopt in reply the answer which he received: "They said, Let us rise up and build."

3. But "except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that" attempt to "build it;" however great their number, or firm their union. From the magnitude of your work I further infer *the duty of Prayer*. In this also, Nehemiah and his associates are your patterns. We find them repeatedly supplicating divine aid, and making prayer unto their God. Probably they would often borrow the fervent petition of the Psalmist, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build THOU the walls of Jerusalem." Go and do likewise. On your sincere, earnest, and habitual prayers, every thing else will, under God, depend. Pray for wisdom and zeal; for patience and love; for singleness of eye, and for constant power to do every thing in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the glory of God by him. Pray also for the children of your charge, that their understandings may be opened, their judgments informed, their consciencies awaken-

ed, their affections sanctified, their wills subdued, and their souls for ever saved. Remember that in vain you plant and water, if God give not the increase. The good that is done on the earth, he doeth it alone. Diligently seek his blessing, without which all your toils will produce no harvest. After every lesson you teach, and at the close of every Sabbath's exertions, you may properly accommodate to your own case the language which the author of the Seasons has employed on another occasion:\*

"Be gracious, Heaven! for now laborious man  
Has done his part. Ye fostering breezes, blow!  
Ye soft'ning dews, ye tender show'rs, descend!  
And temper all, thou world-reviving sun,  
Into the perfect year!"

4. I add, lastly, The magnitude of your work should excite you to *diligent perseverance* in a cause so excellent. "Be not weary in well-doing." It is not by short-lived and transient exertions, but by steady, uniform, and continued activity, that objects so vast and so important as your's can be ultimately accomplished. "Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." To this end, let me advise you frequently to contemplate the deplorable state of the world; the duty of attempting its amelioration; and the peculiar importance of your work to the best interests of individuals, and of society, civil and religious.—Maintain a constant and supreme attention to personal godliness. Remember that the want of this can in no degree be supplied by public activity. Nay, the declension of your personal piety will gradually undermine the foundations, and dry up the sources, of that activity; and render you "weary and faint in your minds." I conjure you, look well to this matter; and let not your services in the *School* be abused into an apology for neglecting those of the *Closet*, or of the *public Sanctuary*. Constantly apply for the influences of the Spirit, to keep alive in your hearts the sacred flame of love to God and to mankind;

\* Thomson's Spring: verse 48.

and beware lest while tending the vineyards of others, your own remain barren and unproductive; lest after teaching many how to "make their calling and election sure," yourselves "become cast-aways;" lest you, who have "brought children to Jesus," should remain personally destitute of an interest in his merits and grace.—Finally, to animate you to perseverance, look forward with humble confidence and gratitude to that promised recompence of reward, with which Divine Mercy will condescend to crown your pious labours in this great work, That there will be any such reward at all is matter not of debt, but of grace; and results not from our merit, but from the Redeemer's purchase. Our best services are unprofitable and defective, and need indulgence and pardon. The wall which Nehemiah built, was first solemnly purified, before it could be acceptably dedicated to God. And all our works, as well as our persons, must be sprinkled with the atoning blood, before they or we can be objects of divine complacency and reward. But when thus sprinkled, "God is not unrighteous to forget labours of love." And the same grace which promises a reward, promises also that it shall be "according to your works."—Your success itself will be no small part of your reward. The very accomplishment of so great a work will be great wages. One soul immortal, rescued from ignorance, and sin, and hell, will more than compensate your united exertions. But besides the pleasure of success, you shall be honoured by your God with other tokens of his approbation. These children "cannot recompence you; but you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Then will the righteous Judge declare, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me; come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Next to the faithful Ministers of the Gospel, the pious and zealous instructors of youth shall be placed "high in salvation, and the climes of bliss." For "they that be wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Wherefore encourage and "comfort one another with these words!"



## APPENDIX.

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**T**HE *additional facts*, to which the reader was referred in page 22 of the foregoing discourse, are recorded in a *Letter to the Right Hon. LORD PELHAM, on the State of Mendicity in the Metropolis*, by MATTHEW MARTIN, Esq. which has been recently published, and is sold by HATCHARD, Piccadilly. The whole of Mr. MARTIN's pamphlet is exceedingly curious and interesting, and well deserves perusal. A judicious abstract of the calculations which it contains, together with the reasonings and inferences resulting from them, was printed in a late periodical work, and is so much to the Author's purpose, that he is persuaded he cannot better gratify his readers than by inserting it at length. It is as follows:—

“This author (Mr. MARTIN) has, it seems, for some years, directed his attention to a minute and yet extensive investigation into the condition of BEGGARS in London, and to the devising schemes for lessening their number. Some of the Ministers of State, much to their honour, have given countenance to his labours, and furnished some pecuniary aid towards the execution of his plans.

“The number of begging poor in England, including their children, are computed by Mr. Martin at 15,288 individual souls. These he divide into classes, according to the countries or parishes from which they are supposed to have originally come. The begging natives of England are subdivided into two classes; those of the various parishes in London and its vicinity, and those from the distant parishes of England. The first of these two last classes he computes to amount to 6693; the second, to 2604; making in all, of English beggars in London (including children,) 9297; Irish beggars (including their children,) to 5310; the Scotch to no more.

(children included) than 504. The number of English beggars, therefore, in London, exceeds that of the Scotch by no less than 8793, and that of the Irish above the Scotch is 4806.\* That the number of English mendicant poor in the metropolis of England, as well as of the British empire, should greatly exceed that of those from either of the sister kingdoms, ought not perhaps to excite wonder, considering the shortness of the distances, and the superior facility of access to London. But still when we take into consideration the vast sums which are levied in the parishes of England, in the name of poor's rates, a considerable degree of surprise cannot but be excited at the very great number of *English* begging poor in London. But what account is to be given of the vast superiority, in point of number, of the Irish over the Scotch mendicants in that city? Many subordinate causes, no doubt, combine to produce this effect; but the great and principal cause appears to originate from the superior advantages, in point of EDUCATION, enjoyed by the commonalty of Scotland. The children of the poor in that country are better educated, probably, than those of any other. It is rare indeed in Scotland to find a man who cannot read; there are even few who cannot both read and write. At school they are taught to read the scriptures; the principles of religion are instilled into their minds; moral habits, founded upon the restraints and sanctions of christianity, are formed in early youth, and adhere to them as they advance in years; and they become, in consequence, sober, useful, and industrious members of society. Whereas, from the want of manufactories in a considerable part of Ireland, the children of the poor find no profitable branch of business to which they can betake themselves. Idleness and Ignorance, therefore, unite to train up these unfortunate young ones to every sort of

\* The writer of the paper, which is here transcribed, might also have added, that the Irish beggars are said to exceed the Scotch not only in number, but in depravity of character: a circumstance which materially affects the argument. "The former (says Mr. MARTIN, p. 23) are frequently very turbulent and vicious; the latter more regular, sober, and industrious."

folly and vice; and the scene, with great numbers, terminates in extreme want and beggary. Their own country being overstocked with people of that profession, they find means to obtain a passage for England, the common resort of the wicked and profligate from every part of the empire. To ignorance among the common people are added idleness and superstitious bigotry. The great body of them being by profession Roman Catholics, are under subjection to their priests, many of whom are extremely ignorant and bigotted. They, instead of removing, prolong the ignorance of their people, according to the maxim, that "ignorance is the mother of devotion;" and undoubtedly it is the mother of superstition, and of slavish subjection to the clergy. Popish schools are not allowed in Ireland; the priests prohibit parents of their persuasion from sending their children to those taught by protestants, under the pretence that their principles would be endangered: and besides, of these schools there are but few, in comparison of what the country requires. Few of the children, in consequence, are taught either to read, or to exercise their minds in thinking upon moral and religious subjects; they are compelled by superstitious fears to resign themselves to the direction of their spiritual guides, and to believe and act as they think fit to enjoin. The deplorable effects of these unhappy prejudices have of late been woefully seen and felt by the public.

"These are facts and considerations of high national importance, and much it is to be wished, that men, in stations of power and influence in the state, would bestow serious attention upon them, and endeavour to find a remedy for the evil.

"I conclude with a quotation from Mr. MARTIN's pamphlet, which does him the highest honour, and merits the deepest attention of every friend to religion and his country.



“ It is the interest of the state (says he,) in a political point of view, to promote the moral character of the subject; and religion is the only stock on which morality can be grafted. To inculcate, therefore, the sacred and sublime truths of christian revelation, and enforce the practical duties consequent on a genuine faith, is a matter of the first importance to the nation, and to the individual; and surely a little reflection will be sufficient to evince the cruelty of such frequent executions of unhappy wretches, for the transgression of laws which they were never properly instructed to respect. Indeed, no permanent or extensive advantage can be justly expected to be derived to the poor, without inculcating on them the principles of religion and morality: and on this ground, the education of youth of both sexes, and the early impressing on their minds a sense of the obligations of religion, and habituating them to industry, may be strongly recommended as a *momentous object of national concern.*”\*

To this account of Mr. MARTIN's pamphlet, the Author will only add one other statement, which, if authentic, strongly confirms the position advanced in that part of his sermon, to which this Appendix is supplementary. On a question of PUBLIC MORALS, the authority of the late celebrated Justice FIELDING is very weighty: and it is asserted, that he “ assured a person, that during his long administration of justice in Bow-street, only six Scotchmen were brought before him. The remark did not proceed from any national partiality in the magistrate, but was produced by him in proof of the effect of a sober and religious education among the lower ranks on their morals and conduct.” See BUCK's Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 59.

\* See a paper, entitled *Christianity favourable to Industry*, signed “ Benevolus,” and inserted in the Theological and Biblical Magazine for August, 1804, p. 304—306.



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